

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2003

Honorable Duncan Hunter, Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2265 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515-6020

Honorable Ike Skelton, Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2206 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515-6020

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

We are writing to urge you to eliminate funding for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP).

As you know, the Administration's defense budget request includes \$15 million to complete a study of the RNEP, a nuclear weapon whose purpose is to destroy hardened and deeply buried targets such as leadership targets or chemical and biological weapons caches. We believe this request should be denied.

The United States has largely concluded a war in Iraq whose primary purpose was to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. We are now entering negotiations with North Korea aimed halting their efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. At the same time, the U.S. is struggling to prevent Iran, Syria and other countries from gaining access to nuclear weapons. By continuing the development of new U.S. nuclear weapons at the same time that we are trying to convince other nations to forego obtaining such weapons, we undermine our credibility in the fight to stop nuclear proliferation. Moreover, our obligations under Article VI of The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) clearly require the United States to work towards nuclear disarmament, rather than further increasing the size and diversity of our arsenal.

The United States already has considerable conventional weapons capability to destroy enemy bunkers and hardened targets. This includes the "Massive Ordnance Air Blast" weapon, which is specifically designed for use against hardened above-ground bunkers and deeply buried targets. While this weapon was deployed to the Middle East, it, unlike smaller conventional bunker busters, has not been used in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Given U.S. concerns about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and Saddam Hussein's penchant for underground bunkers, one would imagine the Iraq War might have offered an ideal opportunity to use the MOAB. The fact that this *conventional* bunker buster was not used in Iraq suggests that the same factors that likely prevented its use – concerns over civilian casualties, potential international outcry, and availability of other weaponry to attack hardened targets – would come in to play in any future scenario in which a *nuclear* bunker buster might be considered. Indeed, the adverse political consequences of crossing the nuclear "firebreak" are even more severe than any that would have resulted from using the MOAB during the recent war.

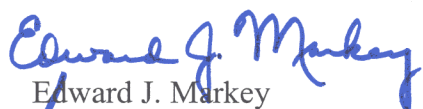
We cannot conceive of any realistic circumstances in which a future American President would order the first use of a nuclear weapon against a non-nuclear adversary. Given the powerful

technological advantages conferred by America's conventional weaponry, there seems little prospect that the nuclear bunker buster would ever be used. We therefore question the need to waste scarce taxpayer dollars on further R&D on such a weapon – particularly give the adverse consequences that acquisition of the RNEP could have for our nation's non-proliferation efforts.

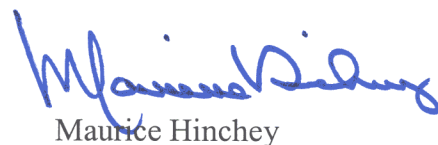
We respectfully request that the funding for this program be eliminated.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


Edward J. Markey

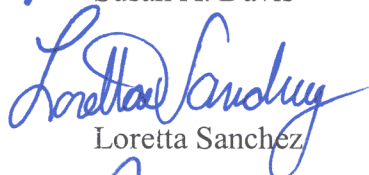

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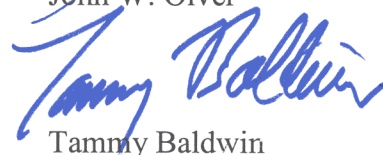

Rush D. Holt


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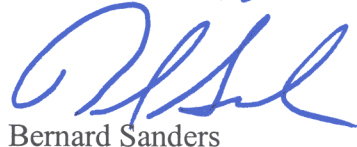

John W. Olver

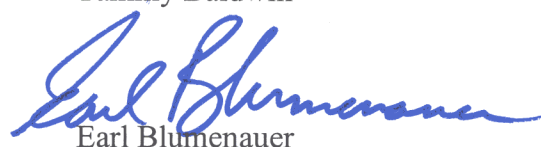

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